

Regional Approach to Homeland Security

State of Kansas Goal

As Kansas continues to build effective capabilities to prevent, protect against, respond to, and recover from terrorist attacks, major disasters, and other emergencies, there is a growing influence to adopt a more shared commitment in defining future priorities and preparedness activities.

Language from the national level is guiding states to manage preparedness by adopting a systems-based regional approach that will enable us to blend expertise and integrate resources to better serve the citizens of the state. The implications of moving to a unified and adaptive regionally based preparedness system are significant. This shift will require organizational and operational change across agencies, disciplines and jurisdictions – and across county and state lines. Mutual aid agreements, inter-organizational linkages, information sharing, and collaboration will become critical elements of the new homeland security landscape.

As this new systems-based thinking begins to unfold, the goal within Kansas is focused on tailoring this integrated model to meet our needs versus a generic approach as defined by the national level in the near future. To achieve the greatest return on our homeland security investments, we must fully understand our statewide risks and capabilities in order to strategically allocate and apply increasingly limited resources to improve and sustain our efforts.

Kansas Homeland Security officials intend to involve key stakeholders at all levels to help formulate this strategy and define priorities for the enhancement of existing resources by networking them more effectively. *The state is soliciting recommendations and comments to formulate our state's vision for enhanced response and systems capabilities.*

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Why Regionalize?

In March, 2005 the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) issued the Interim National Preparedness Goal and the accompanying National Preparedness Guidance (NPG). Over the next year, the initial focus will be on significantly improving or enhancing capabilities supporting the **seven National Priorities** listed in the NPG, as building blocks for a National Preparedness System.

Overarching Priorities

1. Implement the National Incident Management System and National Response Plan
- 2. Expanded Regional Collaboration**
3. Implement the Interim National Infrastructure Protection Plan

Capability-Specific Priorities

4. Strengthen Information Sharing and Collaboration capabilities
5. Strengthen Interoperable Communications capabilities
6. Strengthen CBRNE Detection, Response, and Decontamination capabilities
7. Strengthen Medical Surge and Mass Prophylaxis capabilities

The expanded regional collaboration priority highlights the need for embracing multi-jurisdictional and multi-disciplinary partnerships in order to build capabilities and support an ongoing process of review and refinement of all strategies.

States **should** complete the following activities:

- Define current collaboration efforts already undertaken across jurisdictions and across disciplines with jurisdictions
- Discuss opportunities for future collaboration with other geographic regions that can enhance capability within the state
- Define future goals and objectives for a regional approach for prevention, protection, response, and recovery
- Outline a process for integrating operational systems from multiple disciplines and jurisdictions

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What are the Benefits?

While there is not a one-size-fits-all approach to regional collaboration, there is little argument on the benefits of a robust, adaptive collaboration between the public and private sector, among multiple jurisdictions, and among departments and agencies with a solid understanding of response systems.

Benefits of a shared commitment and common approach for building effective capacities include:

- Safer and better prepared system
- Common baseline and sustainability plan
- Grassroots view of priority needs
- Coordination of solution areas enhanced
- Shared approach for determining use of funds during a time of dwindling resources
- Maximize resources
- Increase capabilities through regional assets
- Gain strength through collective personnel and resources
- Integrated approach for all hazards
- Confidence in response capability
- Stay ahead of national expectations

What barriers may surface?

As new doctrine and strategies are being developed, creating an atmosphere of support and buy-in at all levels is critical. In our efforts to venture towards a regional approach to a national preparedness standard, Kansas Homeland Security officials are cognizant of potential barriers that may surface.

These include:

- Perceived or actual reduction in grant funds and autonomy
- Loss of control in determining local priorities
- Regional conflicts
- Concern of yet another layer of bureaucracy
- Loss of voice
- Cookie cutter template for regional councils
- Time and expense

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Purpose for regionalization

Building a regional approach to enhancing capabilities must be prefaced with a solid purpose and understanding. Although national homeland security funds are dwindling, we must create this concept to include the larger vision of enhancing preparedness statewide.

Purposes include:

- Enhance response and systems capabilities (readiness)
- Develop regional strategies having direct input into state strategy
- Establish a means to prioritize and manage decisions concerning Homeland Security Grant Program projects statewide.

Guiding principles

Effective group collaboration follows key principles for determining success. Kansas Homeland Security officials have determined critical areas that need to be considered in formalizing regional coordinating councils.

- Council size will impact productivity
- Kansas has diverse regions
 - Variance in the number of counties per region (may impact distribution of money)
 - Some counties gravitate to certain regions
 - Metro (urban) counties have greater justification of risk/needs
- Must benefit the locals
- Must incorporate multi-discipline perspectives
- Emergency Management plays a pivotal coordination role
- Avoid being too prescriptive in the organization of councils – outcomes driven
 - Organizational plan could/should include:
 - Organizational structure
 - Membership guidelines
 - Scope of responsibilities and limitations
 - Meeting schedule
 - "By-laws"
- Involve key stakeholders in the development of concept
- Create a website for recommendations and comments